

# HSS SCHOLAR

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

## Matthew McClellan



**Department:** Communication

**Major:** Communication

**Educational highlights:** Over the past four years, I have maintained over a 3.9 GPA, while participating in various organizations and activities. These include academic clubs such as the CofC Mock Trial team for which I received numerous outstanding witness and attorney awards from invitational, regional, and national competitions. During the 2004 SPECTRA summer school program for minority and first generation college students, I was named Male Student of Year. I have been inducted into numerous honor societies, including the Lambda Pi Eta Communication Society, Phi Kappa Phi, Golden Key International Honour Society, and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. In the summer of 2007, I studied abroad in Austria, Germany, and Italy with the Communication Department. In the fall of the same year, I represented the College at the Carolinas Communication Association Conference and won the 2nd Place Mary Jarrard Undergraduate Research Award for my cultural critique of the motion picture Crash. I was also the 2007 recipient of the Radio, Television, and News Directors Association of the Carolinas (RTNDAC) scholarship. I was recently named College Brother of the Year by the Southern Region of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, I was awarded the Bishop Robert Smith Award by the College (the highest undergraduate honor at the College of Charleston), and I received the Septima P. Clark ExCel Award for graduating minority student with the highest GPA.

**Research focus or project:** In the fall of 2006, in Dr. Robert Westerfelhaus's "Media Criticism" course, I applied a cultural critique to the motion picture Crash, to uncover how, during conflict, different racial groups interact based on their preconceived notions. These preconceived notions, or stereotypes, come into play when members of different racial groups unexpectedly "crash" into an opposing group. In my research I sought to understand how the extent of one's exposure to cultures different from one's own influences one's racial/ethnic bias and prejudices. I found that the film Crash depicts a converse relationship between exposure and prejudice, i.e. the more one has been exposed to diverse cultures, the less prejudice one will have.

**Future plans:** After graduating, I will be working as a counselor for two summer programs at the College of Charleston: South Carolina Governor's School and SPECTRA (a program for entering minority and first generation freshmen). After working in these programs, I plan to seek employment at a law firm for a year while preparing for the LSAT and GRE and applying to dual communication/law programs at Cornell, UNC, Howard, and USC (So Cal).